



Arlington Bicycle Advisory Committee

Minutes

Date: Dec 16th, 2020

Time: 7:15PM

Location: Via Zoom conference

Attendees: *Executive committee*: Christopher Tonkin (chair), Doug Greenfield, Jack Johnson, Muris Kobaslija, Adam MacNeill (treasurer), Doug Mayo-Wells (secretary), Scott Smith (TAC liaison)

Town of Arlington: Daniel Amstutz (Sr Transportation Planner), Officer Robert Smith (APD, COBWEB)

Members of the public: Katie Chang (production manager, ACMI), Linda Epstein (Appleton Design Review Committee), Roderick Holland (Town Meeting), Stephan Miller, Galen Mook (executive director, MassBike), Judith Proctor

1. Introductions, Ground rules

Meeting opens with review of emergency remote public meeting guidance consistent with Governor Baker's executive order of March 12th, 2020: The Governor's order suspends the requirement of Open Meeting Law to have all meetings in a public physical accessible location. Public meetings may meet entirely remotely as long as the public can access the meeting.

<https://www.mass.gov/doc/order-suspending-certain-provision-of-open-meeting-law/download>

Committee secretary Doug Mayo-Wells is taking minutes; the meeting is being recorded for the purposes of verifying the minutes; and the recording will be deleted after the minutes are approved.

2. Approval of minutes from previous meeting (November 2020)

(Tabling, minutes not available for review)

3. Report from COBWEB Officer (Cops on Bicycles with Education for Bicyclists)

Off. Smith: Happy to take questions, but nothing to report

4. TAC report

(Transportation Advisory Committee)

S. Smith: TAC met last week.

- Received presentation on traffic study for housing development on Mugar parcel in East Arlington (behind Dorothy Rd/Thorndike, between Rt. 2 and Lake Street). Undeveloped property (wetland) has been contentious for 20 years. Study asserts that mode split between walk/bike/driving/transit would be similar to Vox on 2, but TAC challenges this (Vox on 2 is closer to employment sites). Proposed bike access is via Dorothy Road; TAC suggests direct connection to Minuteman Bikeway via Thorndike field for bikes/pedestrians. TAC will be submitting comments to the Zoning Board of Appeals (ZBA).

Amstutz: Comments will be sent to Planning Director Raitt, who is coordinating the Town's response, and forwarded to the ZBA. Proposed development is chapter 40B affordable housing [<https://www.mass.gov/chapter-40-b-planning-and-information>] so can bypass certain things. The Town lost a legal battle recently on this, so ZBA is overseeing, and has a time limit for review (~April 2021). Next review with ZBA will be of traffic data and impact on Jan 12, 2021. Various aspects (storm water, environmental impact, etc.) are being discussed at different meetings.

- S. Smith: TAC working with Thompson School on transportation to school, although other issues have priority at present. Scheduled visit from State Safe Routes to School (SRTS) coordinator for 12/18 will likely be rescheduled due to forecasted snow. Attended MassBike annual meeting on 12/7 and saw a presentation by Adi Philson on Cambridge's virtual SRTS program with tapes – Arlington should emulate this model for basic safety education at elementary through 6th grade levels.
- Amstutz: National SRTS Partnership has an active listserv, many communities have been pivoting to online learning, many resources shared. Can help identify examples.
- Mook: 10-min interview from the MassBike event that may help prime the conversation of what MassBike was able to do with the City of Cambridge:
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=q7kBn45Dye8&t=2s> Also working with the continuing education program in Arlington, ran a lightly-attended mechanics class, other events have not hit capacity required to run them. Trying to figure out what works, placement in the school curriculum would provide guaranteed participation.

- Tonkin: Adam has a FaceBook page, not sure of traffic volume. ABAC-sponsored events can potentially be included in Town emails.
- Amstutz: Laura Swan is School Committee liaison for TAC, interested in topics like SRTS and could be a good resource for exploring how to incorporate bike education.
- Tonkin: Presence in school curriculum would lead to better, safer cyclists in general.
- Mook: MassBike is onboard, has expertise, instructors, need to find the audience.

5. Lake Street crossing

Tonkin: Lights switched on 12/16. Have previously mentioned an educational video with guidance for operation. Katie Chang from Arlington Community Media, Inc. (ACMI) is here to discuss details.

Chang: ACMI is the public access station, resource for Town and residents. Looking for an educational video to show and explain the new Lake St. crossing. To move forward, ACMI needs a script for voiceover, and guidance on what visuals need to be included. There is pre-existing footage from before the light was installed available; could start the script with the old setup, transition into examples of current function and how it operates from bike, pedestrian, and driver perspectives. Could meet at Lake St to record, act out situations with volunteers (with safe social distancing). Could attach a GoPro camera to a bike, can reach out to volunteers who are avid cyclists.

Tonkin: Will convene working group for script.

Mayo-Wells: Officer Smith, now that the lights are activated anything of note on pedestrian, cyclist, driver response?

Off. Smith: Smooth so far, APD is monitoring on PM shifts

S. Smith: Observed at 4:15pm on 12/17 for about 10 minutes, took a photo. Working smoothly, working like a light, motorists hesitating a bit, path users were obeying the signal. Up to a 40 sec wait for a signal, not unreasonable. Concerned that as traffic increases on Lake St, people turning left at Brooks may cause a backup that blocks the intersection.

Amstutz: Forwarded to Tonkin a concern from a Brooks Ave resident about people crossing against light when few cars were present. There is a 30-day period of calibration and adjustment for the new signal; Department of Public Works (DPW) is working with the design consultant Green International to adjust timing and DPW solicits any comments.

Tonkin: Received a report of a vehicle (possibly UPS delivery vehicle) making a right turn onto the bikeway toward Alewife from Lake St.

Amstutz: Not the first report, has happened even before the signal was installed. Need to monitor, think about ways to mitigate if it becomes more frequent.

Tonkin: Chief Flaherty is aware of plans to make a training video, APD participation in the video might be helpful.

Amstutz: Chief Flaherty mentioned Capt. Curran in connection with this, ABAC should reach out to him. Public Information Officer (PIO) Joan Roman had suggested APD involvement in the voiceover.

Tonkin: Yes. Will forward information on ABAC working group to APD.

Chang: How has information about Lake Street crossing been promoted so far? On social media, online? Can share with AMCI news team.

Tonkin: Town-wide email.

Amstutz: Also news items on the Town website, some social postings from PIO Roman. Need to move quickly on video.

Johnson: APD involvement would be good, but recommend a community safety perspective vs. enforcement. To S. Smith's concern about blocking of the bike crossing, the bright green crosswalk paint may help, could mention this explicitly in the video.

Tonkin: Video could start with prior state of intersection, then transition to current state. (Can AMCI share the old footage so ABAC can review, match angles or shots?) Need to inform all users – on the bikeway, and drivers, pedestrians on Lake St – what has changed. Now have a regular traffic light on Lake St which all users should obey, drivers with a green light have no obligation to stop.

Chang: Definitely agree with relating to older footage, since people are familiar with old setup. Will pull old assets to review.

Holland: Two points:

- TAC should have timing data on how long it takes to get up Lake St, the effect of the old intersection on traffic movement. Mentioning that this is intended to mitigate rush hour delays on Lake St might be useful.
- With respect to vehicles turning onto the Bikeway – Google Maps navigation has auto and bicycle modes, people have left their phone in "bike" mode, especially in a strange city when renting cars, and have been directed onto sidewalks.

S. Smith: Three points:

- Can dig up old traffic studies or get TAC working committee member like Jeffrey Maxtutis to help

- With respect to people turning onto the Bikeway, the intersection is missing a street sign, which could indicate that the Bikeway is not Brooks Ave.
- Also wanted to raise Jeff Roth's concern about the scored surface, but not related to video.

Chang: Can include a map in the video.

Tonkin: Daniel may have an appropriate map?

Amstutz: Probably have most of the same documents Scott would be looking for, there is a visual Green International created which shows a top-down view of the setup. Video could mention that there are separate crossings for cyclists and pedestrians.

Miller: If Daniel can send a press release, can include it on the front page of the Minuteman Bikeway website.

Amstutz: No press release per se, but can send a link to news items.

Tonkin: Can also forward links to Lexington, Bedford as well.

Off. Smith: Need to leave to prepare for snow emergency

Tonkin: Will follow up with Capt. Curran to coordinate. For scheduling, weather is poor, Sat 12/19 or Tu 12/22 might be best options.

Chang: Or Monday 12/21.

Tonkin: Volunteers for a working group?

Mayo-Wells: volunteers

Kobaslija: Interested depending on timing, week of 12/21 is busy at work, week of 12/28 would be better

Chang: Available week of 12/21 or 12/28 depending on weather.

Tonkin: What is optimal timing? ASAP?

Amstutz: Next 2 weeks would be good, try to release by mid-Jan so get information out before large volumes of people are already using it. Winter does mean lower traffic volumes, but could be good to share now and reshare in April when usage picks up. Need to take production time into account as well.

Tonkin: Work on script over next week?

Chang: Yes, even without solid script, can bring cameras and film scenarios.

Johnson: CanMassBike help publicize the new traffic light? Include MassBike on email with links to new items.

S. Smith: Video will be more useful when roads and the path are busier, weekend after Christmas might be good for filming, if the weather is good.

Tonkin: Light volume might make filming scenarios easier, but could supplement with footage showing higher volume.

S. Smith: Working next week but could participate the week of 12/28.

Tonkin: Doug and I can start, get back to Katie, involve Muris, Scott, depending on timing. If this goes well, may want to make more videos, e.g., how to use the rail trail, proper passing procedures. Warmer weather, better light would be helpful there.

Mook: MassBike is happy to promote video

S. Smith: Jeff Roth (formerly of Arlington, now in Belmont) forwarded 2 comments:

- The textured surface leading to the intersection could be a falling hazard. Brighton Street in Belmont (Fitchburg rail line crossing) uses a surface type that might be better.
- Should the bikeway have priority at Linwood Street (crossing a local street with relatively low traffic volume).

Tonkin: Linwood crossing may fall under review covered by CPA-funded study.

Amstutz: Yes, on the list for the bikeway study, along with Water St, may bring an engineering consultant in to make recommendations. Linwood St appears fairly straightforward, but needs data collection and analysis to support recommendation.

Kobaslija: If this refers to the median surface area, people should not be walking or biking on it, intent is to guide pedestrians out of the bike lanes.

S. Smith: Yes, but still want to minimize risk of serious injury. However, did a test ride, made observations, and didn't see any falls or near-falls.

Holland: How is the crossing illuminated? Were there changes made in the update?

Amstutz: Not completely sure, signal heads provide some illumination.

S. Smith: Haven't observed in darkness yet.

Amstutz: There were add-alternate proposals for installing lighting conduits to set up for potential future lighting along the Bikeway, but that option was not funded. The other add-alternate was landscaping – plantings, benches, bike racks. The Mary St shared streets pilot budget was overestimated, and the remaining funds will be applied to the landscaping add-alternate items: 8 bike racks in the plaza areas on either side, 2 benches (vs. 4 in original

plan) and a trash can. There is also a citizen interested in donating a bench near Lake Street, working with the Public Memorial Committee to figure out details. Bike racks can be purchased in a timeframe of several weeks, benches will take longer.

6. Update on the Design Review Committee for Mass Ave/Appleton

Tonkin: Have been advised that the committee will meet soon.

Amstutz: Discussed at TAC meeting that DPW has retained Green International (same design consultant as for Lake Street; <https://www.greenintl.com>). Per Assistant Town Engineer Copithorn, they are creating concepts; assume that once those concepts are in-hand, the committee can meet to discuss them.

Tonkin: So things are moving forward without committee involvement?

Amstutz: Presume that Town Manager had directed engineers to provide a basis for discussion, rather than everyone drawing on a whiteboard.

Johnson: Wouldn't consultants benefit from input from the committee?

Amstutz: Will depend on the extent to which design is represented as complete. For comparison, Transportation Plan designs were initially presented as broad concepts and open to input.

Mook: Has the list of committee members been published?

Epstein: Not aware of publication, but have been informed that I am on it.

Mook: Where can progress be tracked?

Amstutz: Should follow a similar process to other town committees, with public meetings. Public input may be impacted by scheduling, e.g, the Sustainable Transportation Planning Committee generally meets during the workday, but expect there to be targeted community outreach along with the committee meetings.

Tonkin: Minutes will be posted on the Town website.

7. Ghost Bike memorial for Charlie Proctor

J. Proctor: Town Manager Chapdelaine still working to find a location, Joseph X. Grant Memorial and Leader Bank locations were both denied. Town owned-property in front of All Star Dry Cleaning & Tailor was agreed upon. DPW began drilling to install pipe, but identified conflict with a gas line. Temporarily will affix the bike to a tree on Sunday 12/20 in a small ceremony with family. Will continue to work on longer term placement of bike and eventually bench or other permanent memorial in the area.

Tonkin: Gas line conflicts are frequent, and can be difficult to foresee. Should the time of the dedication be shared publicly?

J. Proctor: No, informal and limited for now. Will schedule a more public gathering in spring with a service from Rev. Laura Everett for Charlie's friends, co-workers from Architectural Engineers, and members of the biking community, once a longer term placement is identified and everyone is vaccinated. Grateful for ABAC's help throughout the process.

Mook: Met with DPW Director Rademacher to reconfirm tree placement, also thanks ABAC, have laid a good foundation for a process of working with the Town.

8. Connect Arlington, the Town's Sustainable Transportation Plan

Amstutz: Forum held on 12/14, about 30 participants, good feedback & conversation. Committee meeting earlier today to discuss recommendations, what to add/modify. Survey is still open until 12/18. Hoping to have more bike-specific recommendations in January, but contingent on having a version of the plan document that is ready for broader review (including comments from committee, survey, forum).

Tonkin: Phil Goff (co-chair, East Arlington Livable Streets)'s feedback: too high-level vs, actual plans, hopes to see more prioritization, and specificity.

9. General updates from Planning Department

Amstutz: Forthcoming news item about changes to MBTA as voted by fiscal management and control board on 12/14. "Forging Ahead" initiative is a response to the budget gap caused by the pandemic, ridership is at 25% of pre-pandemic levels with the same level of service. Trying to realign services to support essential workers. Received nearly 7,000 comments, retracted some of the proposals shared in November, but still will have a substantial impact on Arlington.

- Rtes 62 & 76 to be consolidated (Service to Alewife, Lexington, Bedford VA Hospital)
- Rtes 78 & 84 to be consolidated (Service to Alewife, Arlington Heights)
- Rte 79 to be suspended
- Rte 80 to be suspended contingent on completion of Green Line extension

Bus service reduction won't take effect until March/April. Service will be restored pending vaccination protocols being established and reopening.

Subway service will see a reduction in service frequency. Commuter rail will stop at 9pm, most weekend service will be suspended. Some Ferry service will be maintained, and will continue to run subway and bus routes after midnight. Will keep some of the suburban subsidy which helps fund suburban transportation programs in Lexington and Bedford.

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10. New bike parking initiative

Amstutz: Not much to report, have been doing some field work. Bishop School has old parking which can be updated/relocated, significant effort needed to determine the best approach (how many, what kind, where they go).

Tonkin: Hardy has reasonable bike parking. Brackett School has bike parking, but not well designed, good candidate for upgrade.

S. Smith: Thompson School has reasonable bike parking.

Need to follow up with Economic Development Coordinator Carter on options for Arlington Heights business areas.

11. Bike Friendly Community reapplication

Amstutz: Working with Phil Goff on application, just sent an update. Now due Feb 10, 2021.

12. BlueBikes

Amstutz: One station (Thorndike field) still operational, others have been picked up/stored for winter. System will be open through forecasted 12/17 snow; stations will be shoveled. Discussion about additional stations for Arlington, some federal funding available after 10/1/2021. This funding requires a match from the Town, still need to determine how to fund the match. Could potentially apply for funding from MassDOT Shared Winter Streets And Spaces program. Bluebikes communities are being encouraged to apply to fund additional stations, tried applying as a block of communities, but that was infeasible.

In the near future, would like to get feedback on where next stations should go. First 5 (soon to be 6) cover East Arlington and some of Arlington Center. Need stations in the Heights, need to follow Bluebikes requirements for maximum distance between stations. Stations on the Bikeway have been getting the most rides.

Tonkin: Mill St. & Bikeway (although it is private property), Ed Burns Arena & Ice Rink, near Stop&Shop on Mass Ave

Kobaslija: Arlington High School could be good for students

S. Smith: 2 suggestions: Ed Burns center as a bridge toward the Heights, also near Mass Ave/16 to fill in the network on the east end of Town and provide access to East Arlington businesses.

Amstutz: Agree that Mass Ave/16 would be valuable but sensitive to demand for Bluebikes in the Heights.

Holland: Mass Ave & Brattle Street. Quad Cycles might have concerns, when Somerville installed a bike share station near Paramount Bicycle Repair in Ball Square it was a major concern for the business owner.

Tonkin: There is a parking lot nearby, although it is private property.

Greenfield: Sidewalk across from Quad Cycles might be wide enough for a station.

Holland: Heard concerns in Town Meeting about the impracticality of riding a bike to the Heights, despite riders who do so. Bluebikes station at Mass and Park or the bus station could show demand.

MacNeill: This commenter was skeptical of usage of Lime bikes despite evidence, but did want their opinions in the public record.

Amstutz: Mass Ave & Park not likely in the next iteration, probably adding 2-4 stations. Have seen a request for a station near Stratton school, but will likely stay closer to Mass Ave/Bikeway. Also, we want to install more off-street stations, so we can keep operating through the winter.

Johnson: Do the Bluebikes stations need sun for solar power?

Amstutz: Yes, but not much; the level of shade at the Railroad lot was fine.

Johnson: Wide sidewalk at Brattle Square is on the shady side of the street, location is good, but might need to take a parking space. Also, Bluebikes progenitor Hubway negotiated directly with businesses in the immediate vicinity of the station, would be good to take this approach with Quad Cycles or other local businesses.

Amstutz: Economic Development Coordinator Carter did outreach related to the first set of stations. Could do targeted outreach if there are particular concerns. May not be able to get as far as Brattle Street with the next set, due to distance requirements. Town Hall is a possibility, there was interest, but installation was deferred due to plaza reconstruction work there. (The railroad lot station could potentially be moved there, but getting a lot of use in its current location.) With respect to the High School, it was not included as part of the design, likely could not identify a site there until construction is completed.

13. Automated Bikeway counter

Amstutz: Correctly collecting data since 9/1, so a whole fall's worth of valid data. Compared to last fall & summer, there has been a drop off in usage, especially during the week (likely since Minuteman Bikeway is used more for commuting than many other trails). Usage on weekends is still fairly high, 3K-4K trips/day on Saturdays and Sundays.

Tonkin: Maybe a strong correlation between bike commuters and people able to work from home during pandemic.

S. Smith: Possible to download data? Wondering if there is more of a mid-day spike due to pandemic.

Amstutz: May be able to set up guest login or provide raw data directly. Should be possible to remove invalid data from spring, but that hasn't happened yet, so trend graphs are misleading.

Holland: Very interested in more data on Western segment of Minuteman Bikeway, overall numbers and modes of use could be different.

Tonkin: Can consider for spring manual count.

Amstutz: Good point, better data collection needs to be reflected in the transportation plan.

14. Tri-town meeting, possible dates, agenda

Tonkin: Exploring dates with Bedford, Lexington, proposing either 1/27/2021 or 2/24/2021 (both Wednesdays following ABAC meeting). ABAC will set the agenda, we can finalize the week proceeding. The Town Zoom account is available, however Lexington has been using Webex recently to avoid disruption of Zoom meetings.

Holland: February provides more planning time

Tonkin: Can discuss expanding the Tri-town meeting and coordinating with more communities. Concord does now have a Bicycle Committee. Could also include Cambridge, Somerville.

Mook: Don't want to interfere with Tri-town meeting logistics, but Minuteman Bikeway network is expanding. Reformatory path goes into Concord; from Alewife the Watertown greenway will connect to the Charles river; Somerville community path will extend to East Cambridge.

"Tri-Town" becomes 6 towns, 2 cities with an interconnected network.

Tonkin: Tri-town has been useful because the Minuteman Bikeway is a perceived entity. Logistics become more complicated, and bike committees between communities are quite dissimilar in organization and scope.

Holland: At the next ABAC social event we could pull in more trail communities, e.g., Bike to the Sea/Northern Strand Community Trail, the Bruce Freeman Trail, Wayside/Mass Central Rail Trail to Northampton through Weston is under construction.

Amstutz: At the State level MassTrails is trying to bring these efforts together. Held conference last year. Lots of activity, although encompasses hiking, not just hard-surface trails suitable for bikes.

Mook: Thinking about overlap, it's how many concentric circles out do you want to go, will eventually have a state-wide network. Tri-town has made sense because you built this coalition, soon it will expand into a quasi-regional network, useful for recreation and commuting.

Overlaying this are the governor's teams, MassTrails. For an annual meeting ABAC could invite regional partners to share, explore how to coordinate on issues like trail maintenance, safety,

e-bike regulation, etc. Model followed by Minuteman Bikeway could be beneficial for other communities to learn from.

15. Meeting dates for 2021

Tonkin: Third Wednesday of the month. Are there conflicts with any holidays?

Jan 20, Feb 17, Mar 17, Apr 21, May 19, Jun 16, Jul 21, Aug 18, Sep 15, Oct 20, Nov 17, Dec 15

Mook: Inauguration Day is Jan 20. Is that a conflict?

S. Smith: Yom Kippur starts on Sep 15. Week before would conflict with TAC.

Greenfield: Should we meet before Town Day in September (if there is one?)

Amstutz: No in-person meetings, public gatherings for the next several months. Town Day in September is unclear.

Tonkin: Will finalize September date closer to time.

16. Other business

Amstutz: Economic Development Coordinator Ally Carter is working with Bedford, Lexington to apply for a rapid recovery grant through the Mass Downtown Initiative (MDI) - technical assistance grants to plan for helping businesses to recover from the pandemic. Working with other communities can boost chances of receiving a grant, positioning the Minuteman Bikeway as the connecting link between the towns.

Grant expected to produce short-term actionable items, as well as longer range ideas. Discussed marketing the Bikeway and business areas adjoining it. Getting from Bikeway to Park Ave and nearby businesses has been an issue. Also, the Minuteman is often perceived as serving commuters, not tourists. Proposal due 12/18. Not expecting much overlap between these goals and Bikeway study, which won't start for a few more months away. If awarded, MDI grant would start in a couple of months, would have to be complete by June 2021.

Tonkin: Would be great to attract more users to the Bikeway. Bike safety/rules of road video education could tie in.

Mayo-Wells: Could this fund some of the wayfinding, signage we've discussed?

Amstutz: No, technical assistance grant is for planning, not for implementation. Implementation funding could come from the business community or possibly Chamber of Commerce.

Holland: FoodLink is using a pedal-assist cargo bike to pick up/deliver.

Amstutz: Great, just read about cities testing the use of pedal-assist cargo bikes in parks and recreation departments, e.g, to move mulch so trucks are not required.

Holland: Pete Buttigieg has been nominated for Secretary of Transportation, if confirmed, could create a favorable environment for non-automotive agendas.

S. Smith: Moves to Adjourn

Kobaslija: Seconds

SO VOTED (7-0); Adjourned